

evaluation of unrwa support to vulnerable children in gaza funded by islamic relief usa

evaluation

unrwa



results summary

what was evaluated and why

about the project

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) works to deliver quality education, health and relief and support services programming to 1.5 million refugees in Gaza. Depleted by blockade and cycles of violence, Gaza's socioeconomic situation continues to decline, leaving 80% of people dependent on humanitarian assistance. Children are greatly affected by the conflict, some of whom are more vulnerable than others, including orphans, children living in poverty, and children with disabilities. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), there are around 48,000 persons with disabilities in Gaza of whom 1/5th are children.

In line with UNRWA human development goals and strategic objectives, the project intervention to support vulnerable children in Gaza was designed to support the Agency's goal that "refugees lead a long and healthy life, are knowledgeable, have a decent standard of living and enjoy human rights," by supporting the emotional and social wellbeing of vulnerable children and their caregivers through a mix of cash assistance and other services. Starting in 2015, through funding provided by Islamic Relief USA, the Relief and Social Services Programme expanded its support to orphans and their guardians. Over a five year period, **nearly 3,000 children a year** were provided with **cash assistance of \$600** alongside capacity building activities geared toward 16 to 18 year olds, and female guardians to boost employability skills. The project's initial focus on orphans was **expanded to support children with disabilities**, increasing from 19 children with disabilities in 2015 to 671 in the 2021 project iteration (accounting for 23% of the project participants).

Humanitarian Situation in Gaza:

1,400,000

Refugees in need of humanitarian assistance (UNRWA)



80%

of 2.1 million people dependent on international assistance (UNRWA)



9,600

Children under 18 living with disabilities (PCBS)



\$10.2

million in total funding over a five-year period



3,808

project participants receiving clothes, school supplies and \$600 annually



302

guardian and caregivers receiving training and awareness raising sessions



201

16-18 year olds participated in livelihood trainings



600

children with disabilities supported



10

implementing partners conducting case management and referrals, awareness raising, cash assistance and capacity building



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evaluation purpose and scope

Commissioned by the Evaluation Division of the UNRWA Department of Internal Oversight Services and the Gaza Field Programme Support Office. The evaluation was conducted by Konterra Group.



Purpose:

the evaluation serves the dual purpose of learning and accountability. Evaluation findings and recommendations provide evidence for decision-making and adaptation of future programming and enhance understanding as to how the project contributed towards its defined objectives.



Scope:

the evaluation covers five of six project phases from 2015 to mid-October 2021. All activities in all five governorates of the Gaza Strip were included.



Child and youth participation:

Participation of children and youth in the evaluation was central to the evaluation approach.

key findings

The evaluation found that overall, the UNRWA **project interventions were relevant** for improving the lives of participant children, caregivers and their families. Selection of participants deployed an intersectional approach with consideration to vulnerability, gender, disability and location of participants. Activities were **well-organized and coherent** providing for the multifaceted needs of affected populations. UNRWA's **well managed and monitored use of resources** ensured appropriate humanitarian support to project participants. Through the combination of cash and in-kind assistance, along with targeted support interventions and capacity-building sessions, the project **effectively supported targeted children** and their caregivers in gaining access to the tools needed to build a decent standard of living. Participation **contributed to improvement in the lives of project participants** at both an individual and household level.

approach and methods used

Evaluation approach: integrated, mixed methods design including an intersectionality approach investigating gender, age, and disability. The approach relied heavily on qualitative data amplifying participant's voices.

data collection methods:



Document Review

80+ documents (project monitoring information, UNRWA strategic documents and others)



Focus Group Discussions

86 participants and caregivers including children with disabilities and youth. (49% women and girls).



KIIs

13 key informant interviews with UNRWA staff and 10 interviews with partner organizations.



Quantitative Dataset

UNRWA project participant database (n=3,808), the Gaza field office Education Management Information System education database (n=1034), the Rehabilitation Centre for Visually Impaired database (n=121).

recommendations for the way forward

The following recommendations to UNRWA are based on the evaluation framework, the analysis that informed findings and discussions held on results with stakeholders:



UNRWA should take steps to ensure **equality of access to capacity building** components for project participants. Attention should be paid to disability type and gender as access barriers for these groups are currently not well-understood.



Data that documents and assesses the support received by project participants from other agencies should be **routinely collected**. This would minimize any service delivery duplication and enable case coordination.



Although measures for the **internal coordination** of programme partners were mostly in place, the quality and capacity of project delivery could be improved if these measures were **systematized and strengthened** and external coordination between UNRWA and other stakeholders was improved.



UNRWA demonstrated strong programme **monitoring and oversight capabilities** including robust financial monitoring. To improve programme planning and maximize delivery efficiency, a cost-benefit analysis of the project activities and a review of the impact of high caseloads on relief worker efficiency should be undertaken.



Children with multiple complex disabilities and those with acute physical disabilities were not always able to fully participate in all project activities owing to access barriers. Therefore, UNRWA should review the nature and scale of these barriers and put in place measures where required to improve physical access to activities for all project participants with disabilities.



UNRWA should extend their existing, **robust project monitoring** framework to include monitoring of child protection training delivered by partner organizations to their staff to ensure visibility and oversight of this activity, which is currently not well-monitored.



Project activities were generally effective in ensuring vulnerable children and their caregivers live safer, more dignified lives and have a decent standard of living, enjoying human rights and protection. However, the experience of **graduating project participants** and the sustainable integration of skills and growth could be improved if transition arrangements are put in place for individuals as they approach 18 years of age.



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UNRWA is a United Nations agency established by the General Assembly in 1949 and mandated to provide assistance and protection to some 5.7 million registered Palestine refugees. Its mission is to help Palestine refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, West Bank and the Gaza Strip achieve their full human development potential, pending a just and lasting solution to their plight. UNRWA services encompass education, health care, relief and social services, camp infrastructure and improvement, protection and microfinance.